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NRC TO MEET WITH OFFICIALS FROM NUCLEAR MANAGEMENT TO DISCUSS SAFETY PERFORMANCE AT POINT BEACH

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff will meet with officials from the Nuclear Management Company on Monday, April 7, to discuss the results of NRC's annual assessment of the Point Beach nuclear power plant, located in Two Rivers, Wisconsin.

The meeting will be held at 6 p.m. at Two Creeks Town Hall, 5128 E. Tapawingo Road, in Two Rivers. The public is invited to observe the meeting, and NRC officials will be available before the conclusion of the meeting for questions and comments from the public.

A letter from the NRC to the Nuclear Management Company addresses plant safety performance during the previous year and forms the basis for the meeting discussions. The letter states that, overall, Point Beach operated in a manner that preserved public health and safety.

The letter also states that there were two findings of low to moderate safety significance. The first finding was associated with increased frequency of reactor scrams with loss of normal heat removal capacity. The second finding was in the area of emergency preparedness. This letter is available on the NRC web site at:

http://www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/REPORTS/poin_2002004.pdf

The letter also mentions that the NRC will soon make a final determination on whether a finding of high safety significance would be treated by the NRC as an "Old Design" issue, which would mean that it does not reflect current plant performance. This finding was associated with the potential for common mode failure of the auxiliary feed water system due to a loss of instrument air. If the NRC decides that it is not an "Old Design" issue, this finding will lead to an augmented regulatory response from the agency, because it is an indicator of current plant performance.

Additionally, the letter says that the NRC expects to complete the initial risk evaluation of a current issue associated with another potential common mode failure of the auxiliary feed water system, identified in October 2002. This finding is associated with the potential plugging of system recirculation orifices. The report, issued April 3, 2002, detailing both issues can be accessed on the NRC web site at:

http://www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/REPORTS/poin_2001017.pdf

Decisions by the NRC on both issues will be made prior to the meeting and will be discussed in a separate press release, which will be posted to the NRC web site at:

<http://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/doc-collections/news/>

The letter also states that the staff has identified "a substantive cross-cutting issue in the area of Problem Identification and Resolution," based on the two findings of low to moderate safety significance already discussed and four findings of low safety significance involving the flooding of manholes containing plant equipment, repeat problems with cold weather preparations, delayed maintenance rule action for a gas turbine, and an inadequate extent of condition review of a steam generator issue.

In addition to baseline inspections, the NRC will conduct a supplemental inspection to review the finding in the area of Emergency Preparedness and additional inspections as needed.

The letter is available from the Region III Public Affairs Office and on the NRC web site at:

http://www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/LETTERS/poin_2002q4.pdf

In addition, the letter notes: "As you are aware, since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the NRC has issued several Orders and threat advisories to enhance security capabilities and improve guard force readiness. We have conducted inspections to review your implementation of these requirements and have monitored your actions in response to changing threat advisories. For calendar Year 2003, we plan to continue these inspections and conduct portions of the security baseline inspection program, as well as perform additional inspections to evaluate your compliance with new requirements that may be ordered."

Current performance information for Point Beach is available on the NRC web site at:

<http://www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/listofasmrpt.html>

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